



EXHIBIT 7  
American Civil Liberties Union  
of Montana  
DATE 2-21-07  
Power Block, Level 4HB HB 612  
PO Box 1317  
Helena, Montana 59624  
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# House Bill 612

## BRIEFING PAPER

### ESTABLISH THE HEALTHY YOUTH SEX EDUCATION PROGRAM

#### **We All Want Healthy Families And Teens, And Fewer Unplanned Pregnancies.**

What can we do to help foster these goals in our communities? For starters we can ensure that teens have the education they need to make responsible choices when it comes to sex. We can teach them about the benefits of abstinence while making sure that they have the information and tools they need to prevent unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases if they do start having sex.

**A Comprehensive Sex Education Program**  
**HB 612** provides age-appropriate and medically accurate information within the framework of programmatic model focused on developing healthy, responsible young people. This act would provide funding to local communities across the state of Montana to tailor programs to meet the unique needs of their youth.

#### **State Dollars Should Support Education That Teaches Young People How To Make Responsible Choices.**

Evidence shows that comprehensive sexuality education programs that provide information about abstinence and contraception can help delay the start of sexual activity and increase condom use among sexually active young people.

**Medically Accurate Information Is Vital**  
Major Medical groups have advocated for and/or endorsed responsible comprehensive sexuality education, including the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Society for Adolescent Medicine, among others. Teens cannot protect themselves from disease and pregnancy without full and accurate information

#### **Parents Want Responsible, Comprehensive Sexuality Education**

More than 85% of Americans believe it is appropriate for school-based sex education programs to teach students about how to use and where to obtain contraceptives. 70% of Americans oppose the use of federal funds for programs that prohibit teaching about the use of condoms and contraceptives.

#### **Vote In Favor Of SB 612.**

If you want healthy families and teens, and fewer unwanted pregnancies, we urge the Montana Legislature to **vote in favor of SB 612**. The ACLU of Montana, a membership based organization of 2,500 Montana households dedicated to defending the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, **supports HB 612**.

February 2007



Yellowstone AIDS Project  
2906 1st Ave. N., Suite 200  
Billings, Montana 59101

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February 21, 2007

Re: House Bill 612

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is written in support of House Bill 612. The Yellowstone AIDS Project believes in comprehensive, medically accurate education.

There are over 800 known cases of people living with HIV/AIDS in Montana, with the highest concentration of people living in Yellowstone County. We know that these numbers are conservative based on the ways in which states count the number of people living with HIV/AIDS, difficulties in tracking people, and the CDC's estimate that one in three people infected does know his/her status. The highest rate of new infections is among young people, namely young women ages 13-24. In fact, recently there were five women in this age group infected with HIV in Billings within the same year.

Montana is not immune to the realities of HIV/AIDS; there is no invisible forcefield around our borders that takes the responsibility of educating our youth about this disease off of our shoulders. Limiting the information and tools that we can provide our young people disempowers them and puts them at risk of making uneducated decisions. The issue of access to this information reaches beyond religion and personal ideas and values; this is about saving lives from a disease that is 100 percent preventable.

Research shows us that evaluations of medically accurate, comprehensive sex education and HIV/STI prevention programs **do not** increase the rates of sexual initiation, **do not** lower the age at which youth initiate sex, and **do not** increase the frequency of the number of sex partners among sexually active youth.<sup>1</sup>

It is our obligation as leaders in our communities and mentors to our youth to empower them with knowledge that absolutely can save their lives.

Sincerely,

Shelley Hayes  
Executive Director

Becky Webber-Dereszynski  
Therapist

Brooke Bartholomew  
Prevention Coordinator

Dan Delao  
Office Manager

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<sup>1</sup> Sources include: Kirby D. *Emerging Answers: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy*. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2001; Kirby D et al. *Impact of Sex and HIV Education Programs on Sexual Behaviors of Youth in Developing and Developed Countries*. [Youth Research Working Paper, No. 2] Research Triangle Park, NC: Family Health International, 2005; Alford S. *Science and Success: Sex Education and Other Programs that Work to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, HIV & Sexually Transmitted Infections*. Washington, DC: Advocates for Youth, 2003; Alford S. *Science and Success: Programs that Work to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, HIV & Sexually Transmitted Infections*. [vol. 3] Washington, DC: Advocates for Youth [in press]; UNAIDS. *Impact of HIV and Sexual Health Education on the Sexual Behaviour of Young People: a Review Update*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNAIDS, 1997; Baldo M et al. *Does Sex Education Lead to Earlier or Increased Sexual Activity in Youth?* Presented at the Ninth International Conference on AIDS, Berlin, 1993. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization, 1993.